3.1. Political opponents, including perceived political opponents

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3.1.1. Political opponents and activists

In the February 2025 report, Freedom House noted that opposition politicians and activists were frequently subjected to fabricated criminal charges and ‘other forms of harassment’ aimed at preventing their involvement in the political process.293 In mid-October 2025, Novaya Gazeta Europe reported that opposition politicians face increasing reprisals, with political scientist Margarita Zavadskaya linking this pressure to Russia’s parliamentary elections, due by September 2026.294

Illustrative cases of criminal prosecution of political opponents and high-profile political activists include the following cases. In May 2025, a Moscow court sentenced Grigory Melkonyants,295 co-founder and co-chair of the independent Russian election monitoring group Golos, to five years in a penal colony296 on charges of organisation of activities of an ‘undesirable organisation,’ stemming from his alleged cooperation with the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO), which was declared ‘undesirable’ in 2021.297 Russian authorities designated Golos as a ‘foreign agent’ in 2023. Grigory Melkonyants has been in custody since his arrest in August 2023.298

On 10 June 2025, Lev Shlosberg, deputy chair of the opposition Yabloko party, was put under house arrest on criminal charges of discrediting the Russian army,299 facing a prison sentence of up to five years.300 Prior to his arrest, law enforcement officers searched his home and the Yabloko office in Pskov.301 Lev Shlosberg was designated a ‘foreign agent’ in June 2023 and is also facing criminal charges for evading obligations of a ‘foreign agent’,302 which carries a possible sentence of up to two years in prison.303

On 8 July 2025, the FSB opened a criminal case in absentia304 on treason charges against Pavel Andreev,305 one of the founders of the Revolt-Center, the independent cultural centre in Syktyvkar, the capital of the Komi Republic.306 Andreev had also previously worked with the Komi Memorial Rights Commission307 and was an executive director of online news outlet 7 x 7. 308 The next day, security forces carried out searchers at the Revolt Centre309 and detained its executive director Daria Chernysheva310 for one day for failing to comply with the obligations of

a ‘foreign agent’.311 Authorities also conducted home searches and interrogations of a human rights activist in Irkutsk, two prisoners’ rights activists in Yoshkar-Ola, the capital of Mari El Republic, and a Yabloko party member in Veliky Novgorod. However, as reported by Meduza, it remained unclear whether all of these searches and interrogations were conducted in connection with the Revolt Centre.312

On 2 October 2025, the deputy chairman of Yabloko, Maxim Kruglov, was detained and charged with spreading ‘false’ information about the Russian army, facing from 5 to 10 years in prison. 313 The charges reportedly stemmed from his Telegram posts, made back in 2022: one about the killing of civilians in Bucha in March 2022 and another one on UN data on casualties in Mariupol.314 On 10 October 2025, a Moscow court ordered the confiscation of his assets. According to his lawyer, who appealed the decision, this ruling ‘was not a common practice’, given that he does not have any ‘exorbitant’ income.315

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